



eNews from Sen. Lisa Murkowski - Vol. 3, Issue 10: : [Visit Senator Murkowski's Web Site](#)
August 3, 2007 [Download a Print Version](#)

Senator Murkowski Named Vice-Chair of Indian Affairs Committee

On July 19, the Senate Indian Affairs Committee confirmed me as its 11th Vice Chairman. I am honored and humbled to be selected as the first woman, as well as the first Alaskan, to serve in this role. I look forward to working with the rest of the Committee on issues important to American Indians and Alaska Natives.

I am replacing the late-Senator Craig Thomas who passed away in June. Senator Thomas has left big shoes to fill. I will do all I can to faithfully carry on his work.

The Senate Indian Affairs Committee has jurisdiction to study the unique problems of American Indian, Native Hawaiian, and Alaska Native peoples and to propose legislation to alleviate these difficulties. These issues include, but are not limited to, Indian education, economic development, land management, trust responsibilities, health care, and claims against the United States. Additionally, all legislation proposed by Members of the Senate that specifically pertains to American Indians, Native Hawaiians, or Alaska Natives is under the jurisdiction of the Committee.



Senator Murkowski was welcomed to her new role by Chairman Byron Dorgan (D-ND).

Senate Reauthorizes State Children's Health Insurance Program

Last night, I joined my colleagues in the Senate to reauthorize the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). SCHIP provides comprehensive health care coverage to one of the most vulnerable segments of our population – low income children.

The reauthorization extends coverage for 6.6 million children currently enrolled in the program and expands the program to include an additional 3.3 million eligible children. In addition, the legislation establishes a new allotment formula to determine each state's share of annual SCHIP

appropriations. Under this new formula, Alaska will receive nearly \$33 million in funding in 2008, up from \$11.5 million in 2007.

The SCHIP reauthorization bill also provides \$10 million for outreach and enrollment purposes to Native Americans and Alaska Native children and appropriates an additional \$200 million to strengthen children's dental services and coverage.



SCHIP funds in Alaska are used for Denali Kid Care.

To learn more about this program visit <http://www.hss.state.ak.us/dhcs/DenaliKidCare/>

Senate Passes Higher Education Amendments of 2007

Last week, I joined my colleagues in the Senate in passing the Higher Education Amendments of 2007. I worked to include language that exempts the value of on-base housing and the Basic Allowance for Housing from being considered as income for military service members and their dependents when a student's need for financial aid is calculated. I began work on the amendment after meeting a spouse of a deployed soldier on Fort Richardson who had shared her difficulty in obtaining a Pell Grant.

In addition, the bill reauthorizes the [Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program](#) which guides students professionally and educationally through high school and college with a long term program including mentoring, academic support, group activities, scholarships and internships. The legislation also removes potential conflicts of interest between universities and lenders, simplifies the Free Application for Federal Financial Aid by reducing it from seven to two pages, allows for better planning through earlier determination of student aid and increases the maximum Pell Grant award to \$5,100 immediately and \$5,400 by 2011.

Senator Murkowski Supports Dole-Shalala Recommendations for Improving Veterans' Health Care

I support the recommendations made by the President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors. We must quickly work to ensure that our returning soldiers receive the best possible care. I am committed to enacting reforms that would provide military and veterans with a modern, patient-oriented and navigable health care system.

The president's commission, led by former Senator Bob Dole and former Health and Human Services Secretary Donna Shalala, issued six recommendations to provide injured service members better care:

- 1) Creation of comprehensive recovery plans for injured service members;
- 2) Strengthened support for the families of servicemen and women;
- 3) Aggressive prevention and treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury;
- 4) Restructuring of the disability and compensation systems;
- 5) Increased communication between the Department of Defense and Veterans Affairs; and,
- 6) Quality professional support and recruitment for Walter Reed Army Medical Center.



Senator Murkowski visited with Alaska National Guard troops before deployment. She is working to ensure that the soldiers receive the best possible care upon their return.

Senator Murkowski Applauds Commitment to Consider Indian Health Care Improvement Act

I joined Senator Byron Dorgan (D-ND) in introducing an amendment to the reauthorization of SCHIP that would have brought the Indian Health Care Improvement Act before the Senate this week. Senator Dorgan withdrew the amendment after receiving a commitment by Majority Leader Reid to bring the legislation to the floor later this year.

The Indian Health Care Improvement Act was last authorized in 1992 and expired in 2001. Previous efforts to reauthorize the legislation, which governs the operation of the American Indian and Alaska Native health care delivery system, have failed in the Senate because time could not be found to debate the bill on the Senate floor. The bill is crucial to the health of American Indians and Alaska Natives, and I welcome the Majority Leader's commitment to finally give the full Senate the opportunity to support this legislation.

Senator Murkowski Congratulates 2007 Service Academy Graduates

I am extremely proud of the Alaskans who were 2007 graduates of the United States Service Academies. I am confident that they will represent our state and our nation with honor for years to come. This year's graduates are:

United States Coast Guard Academy

- Ensign Julia K. Harder - Eagle River, AK
- Ensign Kassandra Mertens - Navarre Beach, FL
- Ensign Ian Mulcahy - Chugiak, AK

United States Naval Academy

- 2nd LT. Clint Desjarlais - Anchorage, AK
- Ensign James Rapuzzi - Anchorage, AK
- 2nd LT. Christopher Neil Fouts - Eagle River, AK
- Ensign Levi Desjarlais - Anchorage, AK

United States Military Academy

- 2nd LT. Jinsuk Yum - Anchorage, AK,
- 2nd LT. Cleomar Munoz - Anchorage, AK
- 2nd LT. Kathryn Hermon - Palmer, AK
- 2nd LT. Douglas Snodgrass - Leavenworth, KS

United States Air Force Academy

- 2nd LT. Sloan Green - Anchorage, AK
- 2nd LT. Jonathan Stralka - Anchorage, AK
- 2nd LT. Mark McCartan - Kenai, AK
- 2nd LT. Ryan Snyder - Palmer, AK
- 2nd LT. John Sparks - Anchorage, AK



Senator Murkowski congratulated 2nd Lieutenant Clint Desjarlais at an event in Eagle River last month.

Senator Murkowski Increases Funding for the College Access Program

I was able to add an amendment to the Higher Education Access Act that increases funding for the College Access Partnership Program by \$176 million. The Senate resoundingly supported the amendment, passing it by a vote of 73 – 24. I am very encouraged by the support this amendment has received. The funding provided by my amendment will help make higher education more accessible to low income students – the very students that need the most assistance.

The College Access Partnership Program provides assistance for low income and Pell eligible students and families in dealing with the Free Application for Federal Student Aid and college applications. In addition it provides professional development for guidance counselors, financial aid administrators and college admissions counselors in order to improve assistance to students. My amendment also funds outreach activities for students at-risk of not enrolling in higher education and provides funding to improve student preparedness for post-secondary entrance examinations.



Last week Senator Murkowski addressed the 2007 graduates of Charter College.

[Subscribe to Senator Murkowski's eNews](#)

[Unsubscribe to Senator Murkowski's eNews](#)

Washington, D.C. Office 709 Hart Senate Building Washington D.C., 20510 202-224-6665

[Click here for a listing of our Alaska offices »](#)

